

Charles Bolden, NASA Administrator

2009 ASCAN Graduation

Johnson Space Center

November 4, 2011

- Let me first say how honored and grateful I am to be able to be here today to welcome the first ASCAN Class of America's new era of space flight. You represent the future of NASA.
- Even before taking off on your first mission, you have already made history. As the first post-Shuttle graduating class, we are counting on you to help NASA take its next big leap in human space flight.
- For more than 50 years, America has been the world's leader in space exploration. With your help, we will continue that leadership for the next 50.

- So many legends have stood where you stand today – and for the best part of the last 30 years, earlier astronauts have flown Shuttle flights to the International Space Station (ISS) to expand our knowledge of our solar system, improve life on earth, and teach us what we need to know about living and working in space.
- Under the direction of President Obama and the Congress, NASA is now taking a step beyond where we have been.
- We are now embarking on an exciting journey into deep space and developing a Space Launch System that will be capable of transporting astronauts and cargo to Mars, asteroids, and other places we have never been before.
- As a result, we are beginning to transition transport to and from the ISS to America's commercial space sector rather than continuing to rely solely on the Russians.

- You all will play key roles in helping our commercial partners design and build the vehicles in which you'll be flying to orbit.
- You bring just the right skills and mindset needed to pursue this new course.
- For those of you who, like me, found the military to be the gateway to NASA, I salute you for the service you have already rendered to your country and I assure you that the service you have just signed up for is also a patriotic duty to the America people and our nation.
- For those of you who bring medical, scientific, and research backgrounds, let me say that those skills will be even more important in the future as the range of skills needed by our astronauts continues to expand.

- Standing here looking out at this new class of astronauts, I can't help but think about my own most unlikely journey from the segregated schools and neighborhoods of Columbia, South Carolina to NASA and the Astronaut Office.
- Each of you came here by your own individual journey and each of your stories is uniquely interesting. Whether you are fulfilling the dream of a lifetime today by receiving your Astronaut pin or finding yourself joining this exclusive group of explorers just by chance, as did I, you are all now poised to lead humankind to places only dreamed of before.
- I flew four times into space – twice as a Shuttle commander and twice as pilot.
- While every mission has had its own set of challenges and discoveries, what stands out the most to me is the incredible view of our home planet, Earth, from outer space.

- As you will one day see for yourself, from orbit, the borders of the world below aren't visible, unless created by Mother Nature.
- We all as a crew, as a team, worked together toward common goals.
- That is what we do at NASA. As of this moment, no matter where you come from...no matter your race...gender, perspective or background, you have come together for a common purpose and vision – to reach new heights and reveal the unknown so that what we do and learn will benefit all humankind.
- That is our vision and this is your moment!
- Welcome and congratulations ASCAN class of 2009.